Interpreted Virgil, *The Aeneid,* XII. 887-952

Aeneas presses[[1]](#footnote-1) against his foe, brandishing

A huge, tree-sized spear, and speaks from his angry heart:

“Now, why are we waiting? Why are you moving backward, Turnus[[2]](#footnote-2)?

This is not race, but a hand-to-hand fight[[3]](#footnote-3) with deadly weapons!

Change into any shape you want, gather any power

of strength or art or guile: fly into the sky,

Or hide in the depths of earth!” Then Turnus said,

shaking his head: “Your angry words do not dismay me,

savage! The gods hate me, and Jupiter is my enemy!”

He says no more, but glancing around, he sees a rock

—a huge and ancient stone, which happened to be in a field,

and twelve men could barely lift the stone to their shoulders,

but the hero, with trembling hands, grabbed and threw the rock,

rising to his full height and running toward Aeneas.

He throws the stone, and it went whirling through the air,

but it did not reach Aeneas.

Suddenly, just like when Sleep closes our eyes

Try as want to fight against it, we all fall asleep,

in just the same way did Turnus begin to fall down,

sinking to the earth helplessly.

He loses his energy, his limbs are feeling weak,

He is frozen in fear. Now Aeneas takes his spear

and holds it ready to throw, and then he hurls it with all his might.

Never did a stone shot from a catapult crash with such a roar, never a thunderbolt

burst with such an explosion. The spear flew like a hurricane,

bringing destruction, passing through Turnus’ shield

That was layered with seven layers[[4]](#footnote-4) of protection.

It struck Turnus in the thigh, and he falls

to the ground. Turnus humbly lifts his eyes in supplication[[5]](#footnote-5),

raises his hands[[6]](#footnote-6), and says “I deserve it: I ask no pity.

Now is your chance. If any pity touches your heart,

I beg you, think of Daunus my father, and return me

or my dead body to my own people. You have won: the Italians

accept the loss, and Lavinia[[7]](#footnote-7) is your’s. Do not press your hatred further!”

Aeneas stood fiercely with his weapons. He looked around

And lowered his right arm, more and more he was moved by Turnus’ sad words,

when suddenly he saw high on Turnus’ shoulder

the familiar sword-belt, the belt of young Pallas[[8]](#footnote-8)

whom Turnus had overcome and slain; now he wore it on his shoulder.

When Aeneas saw this relic of his cruel grief,

And drank in the reminder, his burning rage was tremendous.

He cried: “Will you, wearing the spoils of my dear friend,

escape me? This will be for Pallas!”

As Aeneas said this, he buried the sword in Turnus’ chest with blazing anger.

His spirit[[9]](#footnote-9) fled from his body, and groaning, his soul

fled to the Underworld below.

*Context for the above passage:*

*In the second half of the Aeneid, which is the epic poem of Latin literature, Aeneas and his band of Trojans have landed on Italy, around the homeland of future Rome. Aeneas is supposed to marry Lavinia, the daughter of the king of the Italians, when Turnus objects. Turnus was originally supposed to marry Lavinia, and so he declares war on the Trojans in Italy. At the very end of the book, Turnus and Aeneas agree to a one-on-one fight to figure out who will win the war once and for all, and who will get to marry Lavinia (and thus become ruler of the Italians). This passage is the very last scene of the poem.*

1. to press against: to move toward someone with the intent of attacking them [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Turnus is the enemy of Aeneas, and the best fighter and warrior of the Italians [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the war of the Trojans/Romans and the Rutulians, both sides agree that whoever wins this fight between Aeneas and Turnus, the winner’s side would win the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This means that the shield was veyr strong, and very heavy: only an outstanding warrior could carry one. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Supplication: The act of begging someone for your life [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Raising your hands and kneeling on the ground was the formal form of begging for your life in the ancient world. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Once Aeneas marries Lavinia, he becomes the prince and future leader of the Italians who live in Italy at this time. This lineage would be the forebearer for the line of Romulus, first king of Rome. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Aeneas promised to protect the very young Pallas, the son of his ally Evander, during the war. Pallas was killed by Turnus during in the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. At this point, Turnus dies, and his souls goes to the Underworld of Roman/Greek religion. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)